

June 20 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Representative-Elect J. Randy Forbes June 20, 2001

The President. It is my honor to welcome the newest Member of the United States Congress to the Oval Office. Randy Forbes ran a great race. He won a race a lot of folks didn't think he could win. And he did it because he talked about issues that mattered to the people of Virginia: tax relief, Social Security reform, strong national defense.

We all knew he was a good candidate. We didn't realize how good until the results came in last night. So it's an honor for the Vice President and me, the chairman of the party, Congressman Davis, to welcome you both to the Oval Office and congratulate you and look forward to working with you.

Representative Forbes. Well, thank you, Mr. President. And it's an exciting victory

for us, and we couldn't have done it without the help from you, Mr. President, and the Vice President, and also the great chairman of our party and chairman of the congressional committee. They all just put so many resources together and made this victory possible.

The President. Congratulations.

Representative Forbes. Thank you.

The President. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. James S. Gilmore III of Virginia, chairman, Republican National Committee; and Representative Tom Davis, chairman, National Republican Congressional Committee.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Easter Seals Representatives and an Exchange With Reporters June 20, 2001

The President. It's an honor for me to welcome the representatives from the Easter Seals here, two courageous Americans who are compassionate to give back to their country, and it's an honor to have you all in the Oval Office. Thanks for coming.

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Have you talked to Arafat yet?

The President. I talked to Chairman Arafat today.

Q. What can you tell us about that conversation?

The President. I told him—I talked to him about—I talked to Prime Minister Sharon, Mubarak, as well as Mr. Arafat. And I said we're making some progress and

that they all must continue to work toward breaking the cycle of violence.

I do feel like it's the appropriate time for Colin Powell to go to the Mideast—and he's headed there next week—and that the parties must continue to work in an all-out effort to bring peace. And people can find excuses or rationale not to continue to work to break the cycle of violence. I urged them just to not think that way, to believe in the possible. And we're making enough progress for me to feel comfortable about asking the Secretary of State to go.

We have another mission from our Government to remain involved in the process. We look forward to the implementation of Mitchell. But it's hard—we cannot start

Mitchell, the Mitchell plan, until the cycle of violence has been crushed and broken. And we believe we are making enough progress with that to send the Secretary of State.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:03 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his

remarks, he referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. The President also referred to the Report of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, chaired by former Senator George J. Mitchell, issued April 30. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to the Business Roundtable *June 20, 2001*

Thank you very much. Well, welcome to the White House. [*Laughter*] The Vice President and I are honored to be with you today. As I understand it, I'm to speak; the Vice President is to speak; Colin Powell is to speak; and Zoellick is to speak. And so I thank you all for your interest.

Since I'm not going to be here to introduce the Vice President, Dick Cheney is a fabulous partner. Many of you know him; he brings a lot of good judgment and a steady hand. And my administration is going to be successful because of the players in it, and he's going to be one of the key players. And I'm really honored that he's here and honored that he's the Vice President.

Zoellick is doing a pretty good job, too. [*Laughter*] I know because I got to see him in action in Europe. I had an interesting experience in Europe. First of all, it's a huge honor to represent America overseas. And it was an important trip because it gave me a chance to reinforce my administration's commitment to the European alliances—to NATO, to the expansion of NATO, to working with the European Union and the expansion of the European Union.

There were some doubts in Europe as to whether or not ours would be a nation that would be internationalists with an American flavor, and they found out that

we are. And I come home feeling upbeat about the relationships that I made and about the messages I was able to deliver.

And secondly, I had a very good visit with Mr. Putin. I wasn't sure what to make of the man. I always was withholding judgment until I had a chance to meet him. But I found him to be a forward-thinking person and someone with whom our Nation should and will work to bring security to that part of the world and to bring prosperity, hopefully, through trade, to the Russian people. One of the things he asked is that I assemble a delegation, headed by somebody close to me. So I picked Don Evans, who is not only my close friend but Secretary of Commerce, to travel to Russia with some entrepreneurs and some American business people. And we will do that this summer. I believe he's interested in having a good relationship, and I know I am. And that's a pretty good start.

But one of the things that I got to see Bob Zoellick in action on was our discussions about trade with the Europeans. I was able to make a firm commitment to our European partners that we want trade. We want open markets. We want to do everything in our power to make trade easier, not harder. I also reminded them that it's important for our economy to grow. If you want to trade with the United States, it's important to have a trading partner